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SOME

# OBSERVATIONS

ON THE  
PRINCIPLES  
WHICH INSURE THE MOST BENEFICIAL EXERCISE  
OF THE

## MEDICAL PROFESSION,

BOTH IN  
PRIVATE PRACTICE

AND

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS,

ILLUSTRATED BY THE STATE OF THAT PROFESSION  
IN

## THE CITY OF WORCESTER

DURING

THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.

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FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDIN.

&c.

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WORCESTER:  
PRINTED FOR WM. WALCOTT.

1820.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING



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Printed by H. B. TYMBS,  
Journal Office, High-street, Worcester.

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SOME

## OBSERVATIONS, &c.

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AS it is known to many that I have been involved in disputes with some of the other Medical Men of Worcester, in bidding adieu to a place where I have spent so large a portion of my life, and where I have, from my arrival to the present time, experienced so much kindness, it is natural that I should wish to make the principles on which I have acted understood. Circumstanced as I now am, I cannot be suspected of any more interested motive, and I find an apology for gratifying this wish in the conviction, that the welfare of the public will be promoted by having its attention directed to the means by which alone, in the present state of our profession, its most beneficial exercise can be secured. I shall not therefore confine myself to a simple detail of the events which have occurred, but employ them to illustrate principles of general interest.



Although there are few subjects more immediately connected with the comfort, perhaps, I may say, the well-being of society, than Medical Ethics, but few writers have directed their attention to it, and not only the public, but many medical men themselves, are but ill acquainted with its detail. The chief works on this subject in our own country are Dr. Gregory's *Lectures on the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician*, and Dr. Percival's *Medical Ethics*. These are works of high character, but they are defective as systems, and do not even touch on many essential points. It is by no means my intention to offer to the reader any thing like a general treatise on this subject, but to confine myself to those parts of it which immediately relate to the occurrences in the medical profession of this city, during the last twenty years. To these my attention has been so particularly called, that it may be in my power to place them in a stronger point of view than former writers have done. I may mention, as an additional motive for this publication, that I, in some measure, owe the following explanation to those, who have thought and acted with me.

The professional men of this city, with very few exceptions, would not hesitate to declare that the principles, which they have concurred with me in establishing, have here effected a fa-

vourable change in the state of medical practice ; but such is the nature of our profession, that the continued operation of these principles can hardly be secured without impressing the public with their importance.

In what I am about to say I shall, as far as possible, avoid every thing which can hurt the feelings of individuals, and it shall be my endeavour to write as if no feelings of animosity had been excited by our disputes. The only thing which concerns the public, is the tendency of the principles on which we have severally acted ; and the only motives which can now influence me, are a desire that the line of conduct I have pursued may be appreciated by a simple statement of facts, which, if inaccurate, my opponents may call in question ; and that I may still, in the only way now in my power, turn to the advantage of a community, to whom I owe many obligations, the result of the painful struggles I have so often been called upon to sustain. I shall say no more than is necessary for these purposes ; those who have opposed me cannot expect me to say less.

To the well-being of every community, great or small, order is indispensable ; when in the great community of the nation one set of men aspire to situations which have fallen to the lot of others, and the constituted authorities are set at defiance, all is misrule and uproar. The confu-



sion is only less in extent, although many circumstances combine to conceal it from public view, when any set of men belonging to a profession become dissatisfied with the place they hold in it, and by encroaching on those who belong to a different department disturb that order, which experience has proved to be the best for the whole, and which therefore has been established by general consent.

In the profession of the law it is fortunately so ordered that nothing of this kind can occur ; but in that of medicine, although much has been done by the incorporation of colleges and companies to secure the necessary distinctions, the difficulty, which, from the nature of this profession, would attend enforcing its regulations in every instance, leaves it particularly exposed to the interested views of those who wish to set aside all restrictions. Against such views, even in their remotest bearing, it is the indispensable duty of all medical men of respectability to oppose themselves. In the nature of things there are no other means of securing public welfare, and preventing the profession from falling into the contempt it would soon justly merit. If a Surgeon or Apothecary wish to change his situation in the profession, and to act in the capacity of Physician, let him apply himself to the study of that branch which belongs to the Physician,

and having proved to those appointed to judge of the proficiency of candidates, that he has acquired the requisite knowledge, (for the public not being able to judge of medical knowledge as they do of the articles of commerce, a certificate of capability has in all civilised countries been found necessary to guard against imposition,) let him devote himself to this branch ; but let him not injure the community by attempting to remove the necessary lines of distinction, and that with no view but his private emolument ; for as to the hacknied phrases of those who would disturb the order of our profession, that regular practitioners are a combination of men held together by interests distinct from those of the public, that it is cruel to oppose the wishes of the sick, wishes which they know how to excite, &c. men of sense treat them as they deserve.

In the infancy of medicine, when the knowledge of the animal functions was very limited, and the remedies few, the whole science lay in a narrow compass, and it was not difficult for men of ordinary talents to acquire a correct knowledge of every part of it : but the intimate connection of medicine with our comfort and safety held out encouragement to many labourers, and their observations have gradually accumulated to such an extent, as to bid defiance to the exertions of the most industrious ; for we may



safely affirm, that no man could now make himself master of all its parts, without devoting so much time to study, that too little would be left for the application of his knowledge. The only remedy for this evil naturally suggested itself, and the profession of medicine came by common consent to be divided into the departments of Physician and Surgeon.

The question is not whether it would be better for society that a thorough knowledge of these branches should be combined in one person, which from the state of the science is impossible; but whether it is better for society, that all should possess an imperfect knowledge of the whole, or that a more perfect knowledge should be acquired by different individuals devoting themselves to its different branches. If the latter be desirable, it is necessary that some inducement be held out by the public to lead men to apply themselves exclusively to one branch. How few would devote some of the most important years of life to the exclusive study of medicine or surgery, if no remuneration but the consciousness of having duly qualified themselves for the exercise of either were attached to it! If a certain medical education were not in general necessary for obtaining the privileges of a Physician, and a certain surgical education, those of a Surgeon, both branches of our profession would soon fall



into decay. The public, far from possessing men capable of extending our knowledge of either, would soon find that the greater part of what is already known would be lost. The Physician or Surgeon who grasps at the privileges belonging to the other, injures the public, on the one hand, by pretending to a knowledge which he has had no opportunity of acquiring; and on the other, by doing, what in him lies, to deprive those who have acquired this knowledge of its reward, and consequently the public of the only inducements which they can hold out for its acquisition. They also encroach on the privileges of another class in our profession, those who professedly exercise both branches, and practice in all those cases which do not require the more intimate knowledge of either, which is justly supposed to belong to those who have devoted their attention to a single branch.

In country towns, however, and other smaller communities, where but few cases occur requiring the Surgeon's aid, it is customary for him to practice as Apothecary also. In doing so he does not invade the province of the Physician, and he pretends to no more knowledge of medicine than a well educated Surgeon must necessarily possess. Although a Physician may acquire a correct knowledge of his branch of the profession with little or no knowledge of surgery, general

disease but rarely producing external local disease, and the latter, when this happens, for the most part but little modifying the former; the Surgeon cannot acquire a correct knowledge of his branch, without at the same time acquiring some knowledge of medicine. The diseases belonging to his department often produce constitutional disorder, which, as he cannot always be accompanied by a Physician, he is called upon to correct. It is frequently necessary also in treating those diseases, to lay down rules of diet and even give medicines which influence the state of the constitution. An intelligent Surgeon, therefore, must understand enough of medicine for these purposes; but he is not required to attend an University, or to devote himself to the more obscure and difficult parts, because there is a set of men whose peculiar province it is to do so.

Thus the Surgeon is by no means so strictly limited to his own branch as the Physician is; and thus, particularly in the country, he often acts as Physician in ordinary, which contributes to public welfare, as in many places there would not otherwise be sufficient inducement for a well-informed Surgeon to fix his residence: to this no liberal Physician will ever object. But should the Surgeon, presuming on this, pretend to act in the capacity of consulting Physician, that is to give his opinion in cases purely medical, while they



are under the care of a Physician, he is then no longer contributing to public welfare, because he is acting, as I have just had occasion to observe, in a capacity for which he is not qualified, and excluding those, who by their particular education and line of study, are so. He is also acting unjustly towards the Physician. Because the Physician willingly resigns to him the treatment of the slighter cases belonging to the medical department of the profession, will he usurp that of the most serious also, a knowledge of which, he must be aware, nothing but the time and labour, which the Physician has devoted to them, can bestow ; and thus endeavour to deprive him of his only compensation for that time and labour ?

If the public wish to have Physicans well skilled in medicine, which is not only an extensive science, but intimately connected with other sciences, they will never allow their peculiar privileges, which, being the source of their emoluments, must always be the chief inducement to so laborious a study, to be encroached upon. But the delicacy observed by the English Surgeon, in the subject under discussion, is in general such, as leaves the Physician no room for complaint. It is but a few here and there, who, equally forgetting what they owe to their brethren of the profession and the public, would, to enhance their own emoluments, wholly usurp

the place of the Physician, regardless of the sacrifices which the acquisition of his knowledge has cost him, and of the advantage which might accrue to his fellow creatures from its application.

Such appear to me to be the unanswerable arguments in favour of dividing our profession in the way in which it is divided in all civilized nations, all having equally seen the necessity of this division, and of supporting the professors of each branch in the privileges which belong to it.

The foregoing principles have uniformly regulated my conduct since I entered the profession, because I was always persuaded that they are the only principles which can at once place its different members on terms of ease and confidence with each other, and secure to the public its most beneficial exercise. But I had not been many years in Worcester before I was placed in the painful predicament of being obliged either to abandon those principles, or encounter the animosity of some of the professional men of this city. As the former was impossible, I felt myself called upon to oppose the attempts, made by those professional men, wholly to destroy the line of distinction between the departments of Physician and Surgeon, that they might enjoy all the privileges of both. The inconveniences arising from this attempt produced a correspondence among



the professional men of this city, which appeared in the public newspapers of January, 1805.\*

In this correspondence the Physicians inform the Apothecaries of Worcester of their determination to decline meeting the Surgeons in medical cases, in consequence of their disturbing the order of the profession by attempting to act in the capacity of consulting Physicians; and *the Apothecaries unanimously coincide in opinion with the Physicians, and inform them, that it always has been, and ever will be, their endeavour to preserve that order in the profession which they conceive public welfare requires.* These letters are followed by a declaration from three of the Surgeons of Worcester, for one concurred in opinion with the Physicians, stating the principles on which they declined the proposal of the Physicians; and another from one of those Surgeons, complaining of the construction put upon his conduct by the Apothecaries, who in a letter addressed to him defend themselves against the charge, with that force of argument which nothing but a just cause can supply.

The reader in perusing this correspondence cannot help observing a striking inconsistency in it. The Surgeons declare that they follow the steps of their late predecessors Mr. Russell and

\* Berrow's Worcester Journal for Jan. 31 and Feb. 7, 1805.

Mr. Jeffreys ; yet all the Apothecaries, among whom were some of the oldest practitioners of Worcester, appear surprised at their pretensions, and declare that most of them had never, till their meeting on the present occasion, even heard of these pretensions. Mr. Jeffreys had been obliged from bad health to retire from practice. With Mr. Russell, during the first two years of my residence here, I had many consultations in cases requiring the joint attendance of the Physician and Surgeon. To me, who was then a young man, while Mr. Russell had had the experience of more than half a century, he was painfully punctilious respecting the privileges of the Physician, uniformly declining, even in consultation, to give his opinion on the medical part of the disease, and assuring me, that he always made it a rule to do so when a Physician attended.

The state of the medical profession in Worcester was now rendered peculiarly inconvenient, and indeed distressing, to the public. As the above Surgeons in many instances continued to act in the capacity of Physician in ordinary, (which, as appears from the correspondence just referred to, it was never the wish of the Physicians to prevent,) their patients, when the case became serious and they wished the opinion of a Physician, were obliged either to dismiss their



previous medical attendant, which was both injurious to them and perplexing to the Physician, called in at a late stage of the disease, or to request the attendance of Physicians from towns at a distance, which, independently of the great expence thus incurred, was often particularly painful, both on account of the delay it occasioned, and the Physician not having it in his power to see the patient as often as the case required. These evils the Physicians saw with regret, but without any means of redressing, except by a sacrifice of what they owed equally to themselves and to the public, till the year 1812, when the Surgeons, finding that they could no longer proceed in so unprecedented a line of conduct, agreed, on condition that the Physicians would again, when called on, consult with them respecting their medical patients, to resign all pretensions to act in the capacity of consulting Physician. The Printers of both the Worcester newspapers were therefore, with the consent of all parties, authorised to publish the following short paragraph, which was proposed on the part of the Physicians, as less painful to the feelings of the Surgeons, than a more detailed explanation would have been :—" We are happy in being authorised to state, that all differences between the Physicians and Surgeons of this city are adjusted, in consequence of the Surgeons granting

to the Physicians their original request, the refusal of which was the cause of the Physicians having declined meeting them in medical cases.”  
 —See the *Letter of the Physicians to the Practitioners of Pharmacy in Berrow's Worcester Journal for January 31, 1805.*

The medical profession of Worcester was thus once more placed on the footing most beneficial to the public in cities of this size; in which the Surgeon acts as Physician in ordinary, either preparing the medicines himself (thus combining the departments of Surgeon and Apothecary) or not, as he pleases, and the more serious medical cases are committed to the care of the Physician from the first, or in consultation with the Surgeon or Apothecary who has previously attended.

I hoped that I should now have the pleasure of seeing the termination of all our disputes, and can prove, if called on, that the utmost care was taken on my part to obliterate all remembrance of them. I never had any wish but to preserve order in the profession, and practice the duties of my own department in peace. I do not wish to enter on painful details, I shall therefore only observe, expressing at the same time my readiness to give such details, that as I was regarded as chiefly instrumental in the change which had taken place, and those Surgeons, who had op-



posed it, found they could no longer openly infringe the rules of the profession, they attempted by various other means to annoy me in the exercise of it. These attempts were attended with effects so different from those anticipated by their authors, that in general it required little forbearance to disregard them ; and as there is but one part of them in which the public are materially concerned, it is the only one which deserves attention here : I mean the line of conduct which they pursued towards me in our joint attendance at the Infirmary.

To prepare the reader for fully understanding the tendency and actual effects of this line of conduct, it will be necessary in the first place to call his attention to the relation in which the Governors of such an Institution stand towards its medical attendants ; and that in which these attendants stand towards each other.

The following, I conceive, to be the nature of the relation in which the Governors stand towards the medical men of a public Infirmary, where, as in Worcester, the attendance of the latter is nominally gratuitous. They devote to the poor a certain portion of their time and attention in exchange for the advantages, which result to them, from the chief inhabitants of the place and neighbourhood having elected them to be medical at-

tendants on the Infirmary, by which they not only publicly declare that they consider them the most competent, and thus bring them before the public in the most advantageous point of view, but afford them opportunities both of displaying and improving their knowledge. The private practice to which they are thus introduced is the compensation for the time and trouble they devote to the poor. That this compensation is ample, appears from there never being any want of candidates.

These circumstances should at all times be deeply impressed on the minds of the medical men of Infirmaries, and particularly when the courtesy of the Governors induces them to talk in a complimentary stile of their gratuitous attendance, and the obligations which the public owe to them. I do not, however, mean that the public are not indebted to those medical attendants of an Infirmary, who steadily perform their duty; not because it is gratuitously performed, for this it cannot be said to be, but because there are many temptations to fail in a perfectly conscientious discharge of it, and few checks, besides a sense of right, to enforce such a discharge of it. It is in the power of the Governors to elect whom they please to act as Physician and Surgeon, but the conduct of these attendants, after they are elected, can hardly be said to be at



all under their controul. The precedent of dismissing a Physician or Surgeon, except on occasions of public notoriety, would open the door to many inconveniences ; besides, did not this objection exist, the Governors have no means of knowing any thing which occurs in the medical department, if the medical men themselves chose to be silent ; and for any one to speak, if the others wish to be silent, requires more courage, or a stronger sense of right, than those unacquainted with such matters can easily suppose.

A little reflection on what has been said will suggest to the reader, that it unfortunately happens, that the views of the Governors and those of the medical men do not always perfectly coincide. They have one object in common, to afford relief to the afflicted poor ; but the latter have also a private interest tending at least to bias their feelings. The choice of the Governors has distinguished them from their medical brethren of the place, and it is only consistent with the common feelings of human nature, that they should make the most of this advantage ; nor can they be blamed for so doing, while their conduct does not interfere with the objects of the charity. If it in any degree lessen the benefits which the Institution is capable of affording to the poor, or circumscribe its beneficial influence as a school of medicine, they may be

justly accused of a dereliction of duty ; and it would be a dereliction of duty in the Governors to permit them to persevere in such a line of conduct. Were those, for example, belonging to either department of the profession, for the sake of gaining experience, or, as they might imagine, reputation, by the treatment of serious cases belonging to the other department, to retain such cases under their care, without consulting with those who had particularly devoted themselves to the study of this department, which may occasionally be done in all Infirmarys, they would lessen the benefits which the Institution is capable of affording to the poor. Were they, on the other hand, to prevent the other medical men of the place from occasionally seeing interesting cases, attending operations, in short enjoying those minor advantages which an Infirmary offers to all the neighbouring medical men, and which in no way interfere with the privileges of the regular medical attendants, they would circumscribe the beneficial influence of the Infirmary as a school of medicine.

When the above circumstances are carefully considered, all will admit, not only that it is the duty of the Governors of an Infirmary to take them into consideration in framing their laws, but that the influence which the medical attendants necessarily acquire in such establishments,



renders a constant attention to them indispensable. All the laws and customs of an Infirmary should respect the public good, and the medical attendants ought not to be allowed, and ought not to look for, any indulgence in the least degree inconsistent with it. Without any such indulgence, the situation they hold is a fair, and has been found an ample, compensation for the task imposed on them.

While it is incumbent on the Governors to secure to the public what is due to them, it is no less so, on the other hand, and indeed the public good requires it, in every way consistent with the objects of the charity, to render the situation of the medical attendants both easy and respectable. Every means which can lessen their trouble and anxiety, without interfering with the objects of the charity, should be adopted; and every facility given to them in the application of the means of cure, which the funds of the Institution admit of. In all things in their own department, which have no relation to their individual interests, their opinion should be final; because in these they are equally unbiassed with the other Governors, and are necessarily better informed.

When any difference of opinion arises among them relating to the regulations of the house, the final decision respecting which, it appears from

what is said above, ought always to rest with the Governors, it should be heard with patience by them; and their decision, it seems almost unnecessary to add, should be strictly just and uninfluenced by any consideration but the objects of the charity. Nothing conduces more to misunderstandings among the medical men of an Infirmary than any partiality shewn on the part of the Governors, which now and then arises from some of the medical men being more generally connected with them than others. It is not only by promoting dissensions, that the interests of the charity are affected by any leaning of this kind—neither the undue confidence of the favoured party, nor the disgust of those who feel themselves aggrieved, can conduce to those interests.

Another point relating to this part of the subject ought never to be lost sight of. The praise and censure of the Governors of an Infirmary are part of the property of the public. They are one of the means of insuring a due attention to the poor, and if they are bestowed capriciously or under the influence of any motive of a private nature, the public are in reality as much defrauded, as when part of the funds of the charity are misapplied. Who will dread a censure which is obviously indiscriminate? and what man of merit will desire to be praised by those who praise where no particular merit calls for it? Such cen-



sure and such praise would soon, among the most respectable part of our profession, become a subject of disregard, if not of ridicule.

If the Governors be numerous it is of great consequence that all business requiring consideration, and consequently every thing relating to the medical department, should be transacted by committees. Crowds are less adapted either for patient investigation or correct reasoning, and in the same proportion, they are more easily influenced by those who act from interested views. Let the Governors of an Infirmary be cautious how they appoint their committees; but while they continue to discharge their duty faithfully, the interests of the charity require, that implicit confidence be placed in their decisions.

The conduct of the medical men towards each other is a subject of no less importance. It should be regulated by the utmost delicacy, and the strictest attention to the rules of the Institution, each being particularly careful not to interfere with the department allotted to another. Their intercourse with each other should be free and obliging. The feelings of gentlemen as well as the interests of the charity require this line of conduct. On one part of this subject, I would particularly insist: medical men, sometimes rivals, are at such institutions brought more

closely into contact than in private practice, and inadvertencies may be more readily perceived. To blazon these is not only altogether contrary to the spirit which should prevail among the medical men of an Infirmary, and to the interests of the charity which requires their confidential intercourse, but an act of the highest dishonour. I have always doubted whether it is proper for any of the medical men publicly to notice even the greatest degree of incapacity in his colleagues. It is the business of the Governors to be cautious whom they elect, men judge imperfectly of themselves, and to him who does his best, blame can hardly attach; at least it is not through his colleagues that he ought to be blamed. It is equally dishonourable publicly to notice to their disadvantage any observation which may be made by individuals, in conversation with their colleagues, respecting the regulations of the house or other subjects relating to the institution; or to mention the name of any individual, when difference of opinion is stated to have arisen among the medical attendants.

Such are the duties and such is the complaisance, which I conceive to be due from these attendants towards each other; but such, I believe, to be its utmost limits. If in the conduct of any of them intentional error appear, and private remonstrance will not produce a due sense



of it, and prevent similar principles from being acted on in future ; it is the duty of the other medical attendants to appeal to the Governors, the only tribunal by which the evil can be remedied ; and if this appeal fail, no longer by their attendance, to sanction principles which they believe to be inimical to the objects of the charity. When complaisance is carried to winking at intentional dereliction of duty, it is no longer the bond of good fellowship, but the cloak of interested views or of a supineness almost as blameable. A disregard of the foregoing principles on the part of any of the medical attendants of an Infirmary must either produce continual disputes, or a general sacrifice of the public interests.

When I say that I remained in the situation of Physician to the Worcester Infirmary until I saw most of these principles violated, and after many vain attempts found it impossible to enforce their observance, it will not appear surprising that I resigned that situation. The detail of the circumstances, which attended my resignation, is due to myself, and will better than any other means impress on the minds of the Governors the various evil effects of the irregularities which prevailed in that house, and which, at some future period, without due precaution on

their part, may again prevail ; although in the correct views of the Physicians and Surgeons, elected during the last two years, as long as they all continue their services, constituting, as they do, a majority of the medical attendants, the public have a sufficient security against such irregularities.

My views of the duties of a Physician to an Infirmary not corresponding with those of my colleagues, I was frequently involved in disputes with them. To enter into the particulars of these disputes, would be useless ; I shall, therefore, only observe, that my aim was uniformly to support the interests of the charity and thus extend its advantages. If this assertion be denied, I call upon them, as I have already more than once done, to adduce a single instance in contradiction to it. The best proof of it is, that the plans I proposed were eventually adopted.\*——I have made one in a Medical Society, with the other medical men of Worcester, for more than twenty years, without the slightest disagreement between any of them and myself having occurred, but, such was the continual opposition which I experienced from my colleagues at the Infirmary, that it was impossible for me to do my duty and avoid disagreements there. In consequence of this oppo-

\* Appendix—No. 2.



sition I confined myself as much as possible to my own department, ceasing to make any proposal, except when the most urgent reasons called for it, and, still hoping that the conduct of my colleagues would change, it was never my wish that any of our disputes should come before the public. It was by one or more of them that they were made known, who openly declared that dissensions prevailed among the medical men of the Infirmary, and asserted that I was the sole cause of them. For more than a twelvemonth, I had heard reports to this effect, but did not notice them till I had distinctly traced them to an individual. I then immediately called a meeting of my colleagues for the purpose of stating, that in consequence of the public being thus informed of our disagreements, in a way peculiarly unfavourable to me, I intended to lay the causes of these disagreements before the Governors of the Infirmary, that they might be enabled to judge of them for themselves. Every one must be aware of the injurious consequences of being represented as the cause of continual dissensions in an Infirmary, to say nothing of the painful feelings excited by such a charge. None of my colleagues chose to attend to this call. I, therefore, that I might not take any step without their knowledge, asked the only other Physician belonging to the

house, one having lately left Worcester, to accompany me to the Surgeon's consulting room; and informed all my colleagues thus assembled, that in consequence of their having made known our disagreements, and publicly ascribed them to me, I meant to request that a meeting of the Governors should be called for the purpose of taking these disagreements into consideration. They made no reply to what I said, and therefore afforded me no opportunity of once more endeavouring to bring them to what appeared to me, a more correct line of conduct, any indication of which would still have prevented the step I was about to take.

A meeting of the Governors was therefore called, and the attendance of the medical men particularly requested in the advertisement. All my colleagues declined attending this meeting also.

I had previously to this meeting written down and shewn to Mr. Phillips, of Hanbury, and Mr. Rayment, of Worcester, gentlemen universally respected, the whole plan of my intended proceeding, and still have by me the paper which they saw. In it was stated generally that my colleagues had on various occasions appeared to me to have forsaken their duty towards the public, which had involved me in frequent disputes



with them. In this paper I spoke of their conduct in the terms which it appeared to me to deserve, but in general terms. I then stated that they had chosen to make our disputes the topic of public conversation, and to declare that I was the cause of all the disagreements which had prevailed in the Infirmary, thus obliging me to lay them before the Governors. Then followed questions, which I intended to put to my colleagues, for the purpose of bringing the subjects of these disagreements before the Meeting.

When I wished to put those questions to them, it appeared that they were not present, but that there was a party in the room, many of whom were their particular friends, who made every effort to stop the proceedings ; and would on no account suffer them to go on, unless I brought forward a specific charge. This I had resolved not to do except in the presence of all concerned, and no further than might arise out of the conversation which the questions I was about to put would introduce. I earnestly begged of the Governors that they would not oblige me to make any specific charge at that meeting. All who were present know what resistance I made to this mode of proceeding ; but after many vain attempts, I found that I was obliged either to submit to it, and thus put it out of the power of the

above party to stop the proceedings, or to allow the representation made by my colleagues to remain uncontradicted. It then became necessary for me to bring forward a charge so evident as could not, I was persuaded, admit of any difference of opinion.

At a special meeting to which the Governors called by name some of the medical men in question, at which it was asserted these medical men took measures to secure a numerous attendance of their particular friends,\* those who had thus forced me to make the above charge proceeded to censure me in every possible way, for having made it: whereas, far from having wished to make the subject of this charge public, while there appeared to be any other means of correcting the principle which had given rise to it, I had some time before stopped the proceedings of others who had resolved to lay it before the public.

The charge was substantiated, among other unanswerable proofs, by the direct or indirect acknowledgement of the accused themselves; yet the meeting, in opposition to a numerous and most respectable minority, proceeded to find it groundless, and thanked them for the excellence of their conduct.

\* A general meeting of the Governors is open to great numbers, because, according to the Laws of the Worcester Infirmary, every annual subscriber of a guinea is a Governor.



The decision of the meeting was founded on a surgical opinion given by the Surgeons concerned. I proposed to these Surgeons to give this opinion in writing, and sign it. This they refused. I then stated that their opinion was erroneous, and begged that the opinion of the other Surgeons of Worcester might be taken, but this was refused. I begged that the opinion of those of Birmingham or Gloucester might be taken. This also was refused. I proposed that the opinion of the College of Surgeons should be taken, but this too was refused. And when I wished farther to remonstrate against this and other irregularities, my voice was drowned by the cry of question from my opponents.

The capacity in which each member of this meeting attended was of course that of a judge ; yet some, it could not but be apparent to all present, not content with having themselves prejudged the cause, attempted in the most open manner to influence the feelings of the other judges against me. *They seemed less solicitous to reply to the statements, than to impress the meeting with their views of my motives for making them.* Now, had my motives been as bad as they wished them to appear, the Governors, I conceive, had nothing to do with them. The only questions before them respected the truth

of the statements, and their influence on the interests of the charity ; and any attempt to move the feelings of the judges respecting attending circumstances was an attempt to obscure their judgment respecting the public interests.

I laid before the meeting other charges of a serious nature against the medical men in question, which many present knew to be well founded. Without entering particularly into any of these charges the majority declared them all to be unfounded, commended the whole conduct of the medical men of the Infirmary in the strongest terms, and ordered their commendation to be printed in both the Worcester Newspapers !

Immediately after the above meeting, I made application to the proper sources respecting the validity of the surgical opinion, on which the decision of this meeting on the only charge which was fully entered into, rested ; and received the opinions of the Master of the College of Surgeons and of other Surgeons of great eminence, which are in direct opposition to that on which this decision was founded.

In the above appeal to the Governors I acted towards my colleagues in the most liberal manner which the nature of the case admitted of. Strictly conforming to the foregoing principles, I altogether declined calling in question the competency of any of them, although by this I acted



in opposition to the advice of some of my friends, and considerably weakened my cause ; nor in the least degree alluded to any act of offence towards myself, although the friends of the medical men in question, by repeatedly accusing me of malice, not only gave me opportunities of such retaliation but called for it. I kept my resolution to do nothing, but what the public charge which I had been compelled to bring forward demanded ; a line of conduct which entitled no man to accuse me of acting from private motives.

The medical men alluded to know well that I have never been guilty of any act of malice towards them ; I have, as will presently appear, publicly called on them, and, should this paper fall into their hands, I here again call on them, to point out in my conduct any instance of this kind, or even of retaliation towards any of them.

Had not the foregoing transactions taken place before fifty witnesses, it would hardly be believed that in the age and country in which we live they could have happened ; and what appears at first view unaccountable, some highly respectable characters sanctioned them. This arose from two causes, their being but very imperfectly acquainted with the nature of the subject in dispute, and their being influenced by a wish to save my colleagues, who were their friends, or the friends of their friends, from the consequences

which would have followed, had the business come fairly before the public. It must be supposed that in the hurry of their feelings they forgot, what ought ever to be deeply impressed on the minds of the Governors of such an institution, that any shade of injustice in their proceedings, however it may answer the purpose of the moment, tends to undermine the very basis on which the beneficial influence of the charity is secured. Can there be a greater discouragement to the officers of any establishment in the discharge of their duty, than to find that the Governors themselves forsake theirs? Or can there be a greater encouragement to a dereliction of duty, than to see that it may be glossed over by misrepresentation and cabal?

Immediately after the last of the above-mentioned meetings I resigned the situation of Physician to the Infirmary, by directing the following paragraph to be inserted in the Newspapers.

“To the Governors of the Worcester Infirmary.

“Dr. W. Philip finding from the precedent established by the determination of the meeting held at the Infirmary on Monday last, that he cannot, consistently with his views of the nature of such an institution, any longer continue his attendance, begs leave to relinquish the situation he holds there. Worcester, April 22, 1818.”



In the next Newspapers I addressed to the Governors of the Infirmary a letter, which the reader will find in the Appendix (No. 2,) to which none of my colleagues made any reply. In this letter I stated what I conceive to be the objects of an Infirmary, and contrasted them with the line of conduct which had prevailed in that of Worcester. I detailed the recent circumstances which had at length brought the disagreements of the medical attendants before the Governors, stating the motives of that appeal, and alluding to the irregular conduct of some of the Governors at the above meetings ; and concluded by calling on my late colleagues to point out one instance in the fourteen years during which I had been Physician to the Worcester Infirmary, in which I had in any way departed from the duties of my own situation, or interfered with the department of any other medical attendant, or one in which I had been guilty of any thing inconsistent with the principles of the charity in their most extended sense.

The consequences of the foregoing proceedings were such as might have been expected. The abuses I complained of continued to prevail, by which my successor, Dr. Hastings, a man of the most upright feelings, within a few months after his election, found himself so circumstanced, that he was under the necessity either of making the

same appeal which I had made, or abandoning his duty to the public ; for repeated private conversations with his colleagues terminated in the same way as my conversations with them had done. He therefore addressed a letter to the Chairman of the Quarterly Board, stating the painful predicament in which he stood. His letter was referred, not to a general meeting of Governors, but to the Monthly Committee, which entered into the subject with care, and at repeated meetings, declared his complaint, in its full extent, to be well founded, and adopted regulations to prevent similar misconduct.\*

I shall conclude with a short recapitulation of the principles which it has been my object to establish.

As in the present state of the profession of medicine, it is impossible for one man, in the time usually allotted for study, to make himself thoroughly acquainted with all its branches, it has become necessary to divide it into several departments, that its professors may neither, on the one hand, be confined to a superficial know-

\* It has been insinuated that Dr. Hastings acted at my instigation, although those concerned were present, when he declared to the Monthly Committee, what I can prove, that I knew nothing of his intentions, and had never had any conversation with him respecting his colleagues, till after his proceedings were commenced.



ledge of it, nor on the other, be obliged to devote to books the time which ought to be spent in the active duties of life. Thus in all the civilized countries of modern times, the profession of medicine has been divided into the departments of medicine and surgery. This change has not been rapidly effected, nor has it resulted from any preconcerted plan of its professors ; but from the gradual increase of knowledge, and the general interests of society ; and it cannot be counteracted without interfering with both. If it be desirable that further advances should be made in the healing art, or even that the knowledge we possess of it should be retained, due encouragement must be given to that division of labour, to which we owe its present state. Where should we have found a Sydenham or a Cullen, a Cheselden or a Hunter, had their attention been distracted by the study and practice of every part of a profession, which, whether we regard the nature of the science itself, or its wide connection with other sciences, will be found to embrace a greater variety of objects than any other?

But if the public justly estimate the advantages arising from the present state of our profession, they will be anxious to secure them to those, who, through their generosity alone, can partake of them. For this purpose, the Laws of

Infirmaries should be such, that negligence or interested views on the part of the medical attendants may as little as possible interfere with those advantages ; and the Governors, while they afford to such attendants every facility in the performance of their duty, which the funds of the institution admit of, should, by their general line of conduct, convince them of the necessity of performing it. It cannot be performed without a strict attention to the regulations, which, when they accept their situations, they tacitly bind themselves to observe, by which their knowledge is applied in the most beneficial way, and all encroachment on the province of each other being prevented, their free and confidential intercourse, so essential to the interests of the charity, is promoted.

Let me not, in making these observations, be supposed to reflect on the medical attendants of the Infirmaries of this country. It would be difficult, I believe, to find any description of men, who, as a body, perform their duty more conscientiously or with better feelings ; but in every community there are inducements to deviate from the line of duty, and in our profession, as in all others, we cannot be surprised if some are influenced by them.



## APPENDIX.

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### No. 1.

In the passage to which this note refers I allude to the following subjects of discussion.

The improved tables of diet.

A more effectual plan of ventilation.

The restriction of the Surgeons to the department allotted to them by the laws of the establishment.

The occasional admission of the Junior Surgeons to witness the more important operations.

The use of the board-room of the Infirmary once a month, from six to nine in the evening, for the meetings of the Worcestershire Medical and Surgical Society.

A repeal of the regulation which restricted annual subscribers of a guinea to recommend only one patient in the year instead of two, which had always been the practice.\*

A request to Dr. Malden to afford his assistance previous to his election, one of the three Physicians of the Institution having left Worcester, and a second being so much engaged as to prevent his attendance.

The foregoing, with the exception of one, which I shall have occasion to allude to, and another† which still remains undecided, are, as far as I recollect, the subjects of all the disputes which occurred between my colleagues and myself, relating to matters connected with the Infirmary, previous to my resignation.

Respecting the first, after considerable opposition they came into my views.—Respecting the others, an appeal was made to the Governors, who in every instance have adopted the plan I had proposed.

\* This restriction, by lessening the number of out-patients, while it left the in-patients as numerous as before, materially increased the distress of the poor in so populous a city, where there is no public Dispensary, and but little lessened the expences of the Institution.

† The subject of dispute here alluded to was a proposal made at a Quarterly Board, of which the reader will find a particular account, with the motives for making it, in a letter addressed to the Governors of the Infirmary, given in this Appendix, No. 2.

Dr. W. Philip's letter to the Governors of the Worcester Infirmary,  
copied from Berrow's Worcester Journal for April 30, 1818.

“ To the Governors of the Worcester Infirmary.

“ Gentlemen,—As I was prevented at the meeting of the Governors of the Infirmary, on Monday, the 20th inst. from entering on that part of the evidence which contained my reasons for bringing the objects of the meeting before them at this time; and, as I am informed, my motives for doing so are very generally misunderstood, my laying them before the Governors, through the only channel which at present is afforded to me, will not, I hope, be deemed obtrusive.

“ That the reader may readily comprehend what I am about to say, it will be necessary to make a few observations on the nature of an Infirmary. The objects of such an institution are twofold; the first, the relief of the sick poor—the second, the diffusion of medical knowledge. There must be some means by which the student, and the younger practitioner, may witness the application of established rules of practice. This can be done no where but in Infirmaries, and so important is this secondary object of these institutions, that in large cities, where the number of students and young practitioners is great, the first object is considerably interfered with by it. It is found necessary, for the good of society, daily to admit many—sometimes hundreds—of young men into the wards and operating rooms. If the general good renders so great an inconvenience necessary in large cities, ought the medical men of the Infirmaries of small towns to complain of the inconvenience occasioned by the attendance of the few, to whom they are called upon to afford opportunities of instruction? Is such conduct liberal or even just towards the public? In proportion as the number of applicants, and consequently the inconvenience they occasion is small, they ought to be the more readily received. This is of particular consequence with respect to surgical operations, because these do not often occur in private practice, and junior Surgeons may pass many years without an opportunity, except in an Infirmary, of seeing any capital operation; and thus feel at a loss, when at length they are themselves called upon to operate. If any Physician or Surgeon find that his particular feelings do not allow him to act on the above principles, he ought not to offer himself to such institutions:—their beneficial tendency must not be limited to suit the convenience or the interests of any individual.



“Impressed with the truth and importance of the foregoing observations, I have uniformly opposed the principle, which would make the benefits resulting to the profession from Infirmaries the exclusive property, if I may use the expression, of the particular set of medical men who are appointed to act in them. It is true, that it is sometimes proper to restrict the number of medical men who act in Infirmaries. The public therefore say, to a certain set of these men, you alone are to prescribe and to operate in our Infirmary; but they do not say, you are to exclude your brethren in the profession from those smaller advantages which they may derive from it without encroaching on the chief department reserved for you. But if the public do not say this, by what right are the medical men themselves entitled to say so? Because the public has given to them the principal advantages resulting to the profession from their Infirmary, ought they to grasp at the whole, and even treat the request of their patrons with neglect, when a more liberal conduct is recommended to them? Do they feel no degree of regret, I may say compunction, in the reflection, that their successors in the Infirmary, which has been to them a means of instruction and of gain, will thus enter it much less prepared for its important duties, than if the present medical men had afforded to them those minor opportunities, which the public allots to them as their share of what ought to be regarded as a common stock? It is this monopolizing, and surely unjust spirit, which exists in the Worcester Infirmary to so great a degree, of which I have constantly complained. It has often led me into disputes with my colleagues; and it was impossible for me to avoid these disputes, by any means of conciliation short of adopting their principle of conduct.

“On this principle the Surgeons of the Worcester Infirmary refused to allow the other Surgeons of Worcester to see the operations, and persevered in generally declining to invite them, after it had been requested by the Governors that they should be invited. On this principle they refused to allow the Medical Society to meet at the Infirmary, till the Governors, seeing the advantages which would result from the measure, ordered it. On the same principle they performed privately the operation which has occasioned so much conversation.

“Feeling strongly the injustice of this principle, and seeing its evil effects, I continued on every occasion to oppose it, hoping that reflection, and the result of a meeting, which took place

about fifteen months ago, would at length lead the medical men to abandon it. I even interfered at that time, to prevent the question coming before the public. On the same principle, however, within these few months, the Surgeons of the Infirmary twice prevented Dr. Malden from assisting the remaining Physicians, one of the Physicians of the Infirmary having left Worcester, although his assistance was absolutely necessary to the welfare of the patients, and he had been invited by all the remaining Physicians, and permitted by the Weekly Board of Governors to give his assistance!

“With a view in future to prevent this evil, about four months ago I made a proposal at the Quarterly Board, that it should be permitted to the Medical Men of the Infirmary, occasionally, and when they found that the good of the patients required it, to ask assistance from the other regular Physicians and Surgeons of Worcester. A gentleman present said, that the other Medical Men, none of whom attended the Board, objected to my proposal. At the last Quarterly Board I modified it, so as to remove, as far as I could, every objection. I called upon them to mention any argument against it; I could hear none but their dislike to it, yet they continued to oppose it.

“My patience at length exhausted, I requested a meeting of the Medical Men about a fortnight ago, with a view to tell them, that since the efforts I had made for so many years to induce them to adopt the only line of conduct which seemed to me compatible with the interests of the charity had failed, and they shewed, by their opposition to my proposals at the two last Quarterly Boards, that they were determined in future to act on the same principle which had hitherto guided them, no alternative at length remained for me, (as it was impossible that I could either abandon the line of conduct which my duty to the public required, or witness any longer the disgraceful dissensions which had for years prevailed in the Infirmary,) but to appeal to the Governors, to lay before them the whole truth, and call upon them radically to reform the system pursued in that house. None of the Medical Men complied with the above request, so that I had no opportunity of once more explaining to them my views, and urging them to pursue a better line of conduct—an assurance from them to this effect, would still have prevented the late proceedings.—Such are the circumstances which led to the public step which I have taken.

Thus urged as I was, however, by every feeling of duty, and provoked by the constant repetition of what appeared to me offences against the public, I did not take the last decisive and most painful



step, till advised to take it by some of the best and wisest men this county can boast of, who saw, with indignation, what appeared to them the public good, on every occasion sacrificed to what they could not help thinking a selfish and narrow-minded principle, and so far from any prospect of amendment, thought they saw the actors taking steps to insure to them the means of persevering in the same line of conduct.

“Into the nature of the measures which the medical men of the Infirmary have successfully employed, to defeat the object I had in view, I will not enquire. I willingly admit, that among the various feelings which opposed me, there were some most honourable—pity for the accused—consideration for their long services. Had these been urged in mitigation of censure, every feeling mind would have joined in the appeal; and that I would not have been the last on such an occasion, I have undeniable proofs, which are ready if they are called for; but if these or any other feelings have been allowed in the least degree to interfere with the claims of that awful principle, on which the well-being of all communities and all nations depends; of which, as a party concerned, I by no means pretend to give an opinion; a responsibility of no ordinary nature rests on every individual who contributed to the result. Nothing remained for me but to retire from the scene, satisfied that I had tried the last resource, though in vain. I need not comment on the painful feelings which I have so often for many years past experienced, while I was defending what I believe to be the public cause, when after every dispute which occurred, it was proclaimed that I was the continual source of dissension in the Infirmary, where if they are any where to be found, peace and benevolence should prevail; and, if I may believe common rumour, every thing which I did was ascribed to some interested motive, which was not stated, but which, it was said, would sooner or later appear.

“In taking leave of my colleagues, I thus publicly call upon them, to mention one instance in fourteen years, during which I have been Physician to the Worcester Infirmary, in which I have in any way departed from my own place, or interfered with any other medical man doing his duty in that house; or one instance in which I have ever committed the smallest act inconsistent with the principles of the charity in their most extended sense. If I have on any occasion spoken with too much warmth, if it be thought that I have too much waived delicacy towards my colleagues, let it be recollected that it was not in my own cause; for however it may be denied, the facts will bear me out, that I acted in the cause

of the public, whose most essential rights appeared to me to be invaded.

“ I know what I have done has, by some of the friends of the accused, been ascribed to malice towards them. Are the proceedings which I have detailed such as could have resulted from this principle? I heard myself accused of it publicly and in the grossest manner. The silent contempt with which I heard the accusation, was my reply to it. My character, I hope, required no other.

“ As I have called upon the medical men in question to speak to my conduct towards the Infirmary, I here call upon them to speak to my conduct towards themselves; to point out one instance of the slightest degree of malice or even of retaliation towards any of them, and they know how far, and how often they have provoked me; I call upon them to point out one instance in which I gave them the least annoyance, except in my own defence, and that of principles universally admitted. It was my endeavour for some years after I came to Worcester to bring the medical profession of this city into that state of regularity which the good of the public and the respectability of the medical men equally required. Having effected this, my sole desire has since been, to perform the duties of my profession in peace. I call upon the medical men in question to say whether I have been permitted to do so.—If they cannot point out an instance in which I have deviated from this line of conduct, it is a sufficient proof of the nature of their conduct towards me, that I am called upon thus publicly to defend myself.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful, humble Servant,

A. P. W. PHILIP.

Worcester, April 24th, 1818.